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SUBJECT: GULF IRAQI EXPO GATHERING SUPPORT

REF: MANAMA 416

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¶1. (U) This is an action request. Please see para 5. Iraqi DCM Ahmed Agha accompanied by Baghdad and Amman-based I-Vision Group CEO Murtada Aldin, called on the Ambassador May 13 to brief him on the Gulf Iraqi Expo (GIX). The GIX is set to take place November 1-3, 2007, at the Bahrain Exhibition and Convention Center (reftel). Agha said the Iraqi Embassy in Bahrain was limited by its small size and believed USG support would be vital to the success of the event, particularly in encouraging American companies to participate.

¶2. (SBU) Murtada pointed out that while there had been numerous commercial events geared toward promoting Iraqi trade and investment opportunities, GIX was the first event outside Iraq to be officially sponsored by the Iraqi Government. He said Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki had endorsed the event and had even personally designated November 1 as a suitable kick-off date (symbolically timed to coincide with the traditional November 1 opening of Iraq's premier trade fair event, the Baghdad International Fair). Murtada added that a share of the profits from this event would go to the Iraqi Trade Ministry.

¶3. (U) Murtada said he had recently met with Bahraini Minister of Industry and Commerce Hassan Fakhro and that Fakhro had agreed that his ministry would join the Iraqi Ministry of Trade as a co-patron of the GIX. Murtada said I-Vision had also secured the sponsorship of UNIDO, Ahli United Bank, CNBC, the Bahrain Chamber of Industry and Commerce, and others. He claimed that some 800 Iraqi Government officials and 1200 Iraqi businessmen had already registered to participate. Plans also called for GIX to feature specialized pavilions for Chinese, Pakistani, Italian and Malaysian firms. Murtada hoped the Embassy would be instrumental in encouraging U.S. businesses to participate.

¶4. (U) The Ambassador expressed support in principle for this commercial event, and told Agha and Murtada that the Embassy had already provided information on the GIX to the local American Chamber of Commerce. The Ambassador asked to be kept informed of developments and preparations for the event.

¶5. (U) Comment and Action Request: The promotional material, and the strong pitch made by DCM Agha and I-Vision, suggest an ambitious effort to promote commercial ties between Iraq and the region. We would welcome Embassy Baghdad's assessment of the event, and how committed the Ministry of Trade is to it. From our perspective, this looks like a promising way for Bahrain to help support Iraq, although we

note that the resources of Iraq's Embassy are limited and currently there are tight restrictions on visas for Iraqis visiting Bahrain. Those restrictions would obviously have to dramatically loosen-up if 2000 Iraqi officials and businessmen were to come for the expo. Details on the expo can be seen at [www.gixexpo.com](http://www.gixexpo.com).

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<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/nea/manama/>

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